

October 4, 2012

Rhode Island High School Equivalency Program Regulations – Revisions Needed

Introduction for the Board of Regents

“The Rhode Island High School Equivalency Program enables Rhode Island adults and out-of-school youth to gain personal satisfaction, career opportunities, and increased academic possibilities by earning a high school equivalency diploma from the state of Rhode Island” (High School Equivalency Program Regulations, page 2). The General Educational Development (GED) test is currently the national standard for high school equivalency credentialing.

The most recent version of these regulations was approved in September 2003.

In addition to the fact that these regulations are nine years old, they need to be updated for a variety of reasons:

GED test administration: The GED test will be delivered by computer instead of the paper and pencil test, with all testing transitioning to computer by January 2014. Registration and payment for testing will be done online instead of in person, and payment costs will increase. Rhode Island cannot pilot the computer based test until the regulations are updated to reflect the new testing requirements.

GED test enhancements: The new version of the GED test will not only be computer based but will also be aligned with the Common Core State Standards, with the release scheduled for January 2014. The Rhode Island Department of Education has also adopted the Common Core State Standards for its elementary and secondary education standards.

Rhode Island General Law 16-19-1, Compulsory Attendance: The new compulsory attendance law allows a waiver of attendance to 16- and 17-year-old students who have an approved Alternative Learning Plan. This plan has, as its end goal, a high school diploma or its equivalent, which in many cases is the GED credential.

In order to ensure that a viable alternative pathway to a high school equivalent is available for the tens of thousands of Rhode Islanders without a high school diploma and for the hundreds of out-of-school youth, the Rhode Island High School Equivalency Program Regulations must be updated. Due to the imminent changes to the GED testing protocol, it is important to adopt new High School Equivalency Program regulations by the end of the calendar year.